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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 330. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 27, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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No. 330.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 27, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A DRAMATIC REVENGE.

ABOUT eleven years ago I was in Paris for the first time. Louis Napoleon was at Chislehurst, and the many adventurers, good, bad, and indifferent in character, who had served him had not yet lost all hope of the return of their patron, and, consequently, had not yet thought it worth while to settle down into peace and quietness.

Young Alexis de Malladine, whom I frequently met at a *café* which I frequented, was an exceedingly nice fellow, and although he thought that France was the finest land on earth, and that his countrywomen were the best specimens of their sex, he had, by some means or other, become more attached to Alice Rae, a young American lady of my acquaintance, who, since the conclusion of peace with Germany, had, with her mother, taken up her abode not far from the house in which the ex-captain resided.

I was alone in the French capital, and had but few friends there save Mrs. Rae, her daughter Alice, and Alexis, and so it happened that I passed a good deal of my time in the society of these three.

If there was no formal engagement between the two, it was at least a perfectly well understood thing by all the parties concerned that, as soon as Alexis should get an appointment for which at the time he was a candidate, he was to marry Alice; and I, although only a few years her senior, was to give her away at the altar.

One night the opera-house was crowded more than usual. A great singer was to appear, and a new work, by a renowned composer, was to be performed.

Alexis de Malladine, sitting in the stalls, seemed scarcely to listen to the music or to notice the acting, and his eyes were much more often turned in the direction of my box than in that of the stage.

Struck Alexis in the face with his glove.

Alice and her mother were there with me; and, as the curtain fell at the conclusion of the first act, Alexis came up to us.

He was in high spirits, for he had just heard that the Minister had decided to give him the coveted post, and he expected to hear in a few days that his appointment had been agreed to by the President.

We congratulated him; and, as he left us to return to his seat, my box being very small, I said to him:

"You'll be a happy man in a month or two now, Alexis."

He smiled and shut the door.

We watched him as he threaded his way to his seat. It was in the centre of the second row from the orchestra, and he had left his opera-glasses on the fauteuil in order to show that it was occupied; but, during his absence, a tall, military-looking man had appropriated it, and had coolly put the glasses on one side.

Alexis approached the stranger with the utmost politeness, and, I suppose—for, naturally, I could not hear—requested him to move.

The interloper, however, did not deign to answer, but sneeringly looked up at De Malladine as though to ask him what he meant by his intrusion.

Alexis pointed to the opera-glasses; yet the stranger neither replied nor moved but appeared as though he did not hear.

I saw that matters were assuming a dangerous complexion, for in the new comer I recognised Louis de la Breton, an ex-officer, like Alexis; a notorious bully, and one of the most celebrated duellists in France.

But what could I do? I could only sit still, much against my will, and witness the inevitable consequences.

I thought that poor Alice would faint when De la Breton rose in the calmest way before the crowded assemblage and struck Alexis in the face with his glove; but she recovered herself, and, pale as a statue, watched her lover pick up his opera-glasses, bow to his insulter, and without a word leave the building.

There were some suppressed exclamations from the audience, but these were hushed when the duellist again rose, gazed around him, mockingly imitated De Malladine's parting bow, and with a smile resumed his seat.

This was too much for Alice. She could remain no longer; she must go home. And so, with some difficulty, I got her and her mother to a carriage, told the coachman to drive them home, and myself walked quickly, and with much misgiving, to De Malladine's lodging.

He had arrived before me, and was waiting when I entered his room.

"Of course," he said, as he saw me, and rose, "you, my

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With the name of Alice on his lips fell dead.

dear friend, will assist me. It is impossible to do anything save fight. Even Alice could not make me alter my conviction upon that point—the insult was so public."

"Why not leave the country?" I suggested.

"Then I should have to surrender my appointment and Alice, too. No, my dear fellow, I am a Frenchman, and I must fight; and, moreover, you must arrange the particulars for me. If he shoots me, it cannot be helped. If I shoot him, I shall have shot one of the biggest scoundrels in Paris. I beg you to call upon De la Breton to-night. I have already discovered his address. Here it is."

"But must you really fight? It is suicide to fight with a professional duellist."

"Ah!" he said, shaking his head, "I am afraid that it is suicide; but fight I must, so, please, do not try to persuade me that I need not. And I will fight, too, as soon as possible. You can arrange everything for to-morrow morning. I must have the matter over. In a day or two I might be a coward."

By his looks he implored me to go to De la Breton; and, constituted as French society was, and still is, I had no other course open to me than to do as he wished.

"If monsieur comes from Monsieur Alexis de Malladine," said a man-servant when I inquired whether I could see his master, "Monsieur De la Breton has sent to say that he does not propose to leave the opera until after the performance is over. He has, however, despatched this pencilled note, which I am instructed to give to the gentleman who came from Monsieur De Malladine."

"I tore open the missive, which contained two cards, one bearing the name of the duellist, and the other that of Monsieur Ferdinand de Jarnac, Rue Vivienne 18. Certainly, it was an off hand way of acquainting me with the name and whereabouts of De la Breton's second; but, as I wished to pick no quarrel, I walked on to the Rue Vivienne, and in a few minutes was ushered into the presence of Monsieur De Jarnac himself.

He did not strike me as appearing particularly warlike; but, after formally saluting me, he at once touched upon the object of my visit, and ere I had been ten minutes in his company had arranged to meet De Malladine and myself at a certain spot, dear to duellists, at an early hour next morning, and to bring De la Breton with him.

"I doubt if we shall need a surgeon," he said to me quite affably at parting; "but, if you please, you can bring one. In his last affair my principal shot his man through the temples. Death was instantaneous. I sincerely hope, monsieur, that your friend is as clever. Some men are such bunglers. I trust that we shall see a pretty piece of work in the morning."

"Confound the fellow!" I said to myself as I left the house and sought the residence of my own doctor. "I am afraid that poor De Malladine is not such a consummate murderer as De la Breton."

After seeing the surgeon, to whom I briefly explained matters, I hurried to Mrs. Rae's house. She was doing her best to comfort her daughter, who was in the greatest possible distress.

"Are they going to fight?" she asked me.

"My dear Alice," I said, "they are. I have done my best to dissuade Alexis, but he says, and I am obliged to agree with him, that he must fight. Let us hope for the best. He has a sure eye and a steady hand, and he has right on his side. The other man is a scoundrel."

"You are to be with him?" asked Mrs. Rae, looking as white as a sheet.

"Yes; they are to meet to-morrow morning, and by breakfast time Alice's suspense will be over. She must bear up."

"You must prevent the duel," sobbed the half-heartbroken girl. "Cannot Alexis let the insult pass? But no. It was so public."

"You can only hope," I said. "I will see you in the morning; but now I must go back to him and see that he gets some sleep."

"Tell him," cried Alice, "that if he is killed, I shall die. Come here directly it is over. Come even if he falls; you must tell me about him. I must hear everything."

She buried her face in her hands; and I, escaping from the scene, hastened back to Alexis. He was still waiting; and his hair was in disorder, and his face pale when he looked up at me.

"I am no coward," he said with a smile; "I am saying good-bye to her, for I shall die to-morrow."

"My dear fellow," I exclaimed, "you will shoot De la Breton, and be married next month. Finish your writing at once, and go to bed. I will sleep to-night on your sofa, for I must see that you turn out in time to-morrow morning, so be as quick as possible."

He wrote for another half-hour, addressed the document to Alice Rae, placed a lock of his hair within it, and, after sealing it up, gave it to me.

"Give that to her," he said, "if De la Breton kills me outright, and I know that he will. If it were not for Alice, I declare that I should feel quite glad to meet him. Now for bed."

He undressed, whilst I lay down on a sofa in the next room and lighted a cigar; for, upon reflection, I decided that I could not afford to sleep that night.

Soon all was still, and I stole in, to find Alexis lying as quiet as a child, with a smile upon his lips. Probably I passed a more uncomfortable night than he did. Only with the greatest possible difficulty could I keep awake, and the hours seemed to linger for ever.

At last, however, daylight dawned, and I called De Malladine, who awoke refreshed and in comparatively good spirits.

After a hurried breakfast, we muffled ourselves up. I placed a flask of brandy, some cartridges and a brace of pistols in my pockets, and we sallied forth into the cold morning air.

Scarcely anyone, save a sleepy *sergeant* here and there, was abroad; and through the silent streets we went for a mile or so, until we reached the meeting place in the Bois de Boulogne.

De la Breton and De Jarnac were there before us, and my friend, the surgeon, arrived immediately afterwards in his carriage, which waited near at hand.

The pistols were produced and loaded. De la Breton chose one, and I handed the other to De Malladine, and then the two men took up positions at a distance of ten paces from each other, and waited for De Jarnac to give the signal to fire.

"Stay!" cried the bully: "let the young fellow listen; I'm not trifling with him. Where would he like to be hit? I am generous, *parbleu!*

"If I do not kill you," said Alexis, quietly, "I prefer to die."

"Then I will shoot you through the heart," coolly observed De la Breton. "It will teach other fools not to challenge me."

There was something to me unspeakably horrible in the way in which these last words were pronounced. I shuddered and looked at Alexis. He smiled at me, and almost at the same instant De Jarnac gave the signal.

It was as I had feared. De Malladine missed his aim, and De la Breton's bullet told. Poor Alexis turned round towards me with fixed eyes and pale face, and, with the name of Alice on his lips, fell dead.

De la Breton sneeringly departed at once in company with De Jarnac, while I aided the surgeon in his hasty examination of De Malladine's body.

Surely enough, the bullet had passed through his heart. He

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must have died immediately, for he did not move after he fell, and the last smile with which he had looked at me was still upon his face.

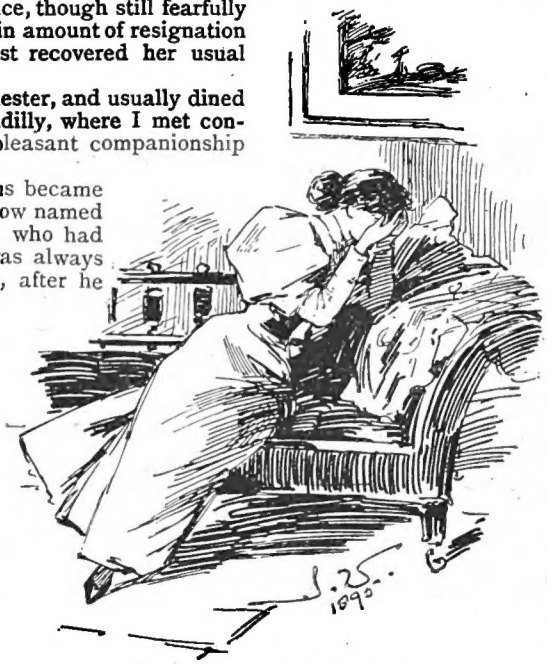
It was a melancholy business in every respect. I had to break the sad news as best I could to Alice and her mother, and the two ladies were so completely overcome that I feared lest the shock might have a permanent effect upon their health.

For my part, I was obliged to hurry home to England as soon as possible; and De la Breton, I heard, also got away, and remained out of France for a few months until the affair had blown over.

I kept up a correspondence with Mrs. Rae, and was glad, after a time, to hear from her that Alice, though still fearfully upset, had learned to look with a certain amount of resignation upon her misfortune, and had almost recovered her usual health.

Meanwhile I settled down in Manchester, and usually dined at one of the restaurants near Piccadilly, where I met congenial spirits, and was able to get pleasant companionship as well as good dinners.

Among the men with whom I thus became acquainted was a young Glasgow fellow named Bond, a dare-devil sort of a fellow, who had travelled all the world over, and was always thirsting for excitement. One day, after he had been dining with me, the conversation turned upon French manners and customs, and I happened to tell him the story of poor De Malladine's death—a matter in which Bond appeared to be much interested. He asked me a good many questions about all the persons concerned, and, finally, the subject having dropped, and, it being very late, we separated.



She buried her face in her hands.

Next day, at the restaurant, Bond did not appear. Weeks passed, and then months, and still he did not dine there; so I concluded that he had returned to Glasgow. And I confess that I had begun to forget him altogether, when one evening he dropped in and took his old seat, just as though he had occupied it regularly, and had seen me only on the previous day.

"Where have you been?" I asked, after I had heartily shaken hands with him.

"I have been over to Paris," he said. "Do you remember De la Breton? On my arrival I found out a little more than you told me about him; and when I had thoroughly convinced myself that he was an even greater blackguard than you had described, I took a course of lessons at a shooting gallery. Every day for a month I went and practised for an hour or two, until I was able to hit a sixpence every time at a distance of ten paces. I then took a box at the opera; it may have been the very same box that you had that night. It was the first performance of Verdi's 'Aïda.' De la Breton was pointed out to me. He sat in the stalls.

"Between the acts he left his seat in order to speak to a lady in another part of the house. As quickly as possible I descended and took his place. He returned, and asked me in a bullying tone to move. I refused. He persisted. I struck him. He sent me a challenge, and we met curiously enough in the Bois and upon the very same spot where he had killed your friend De Malladine.

"Before the signal was given, I said, 'Monsieur de la Breton, listen to me. I am not trifling with you. Where would you like to be hit? I am generous—as much as you were to Alexis de Malladine.' He turned a deadly white."

"'We will see,' he said, 'whether I shall not make a second De Malladine of you.' 'Never mind,' I returned, 'I will do my best and shoot you through the heart as you shot him. It will teach other bullies not to challenge me.' I suppose that upset him. His aim was spoilt, and I shot him dead, right through the heart and avenged your friend, at the same time ridding Paris of her biggest villain!"

"Well done, Bond!" I exclaimed.

"Wait," he said, "until I finish the drama. We managed to keep the matter very quiet; and before leaving France I was able to call on Mrs. Rae, who is now at Boulogne, for I had a letter of introduction to her from a Parisian acquaintance. When I first saw her, she knew nothing of the affair, but they read of the matter in the newspapers, and then they didn't know how to make enough of me.

"I found Alice to be a pretty girl, somewhat spoilt by her long mourning, and very little inclined to listen to me; but after three weeks, sir, of hard persuasion, she gave in, and she and her mother are now coming over next month. I believe you were to give Alice away at the altar. When she arrives you will have a chance."

"And," I said, shaking the chivalric fellow's hand, "I shall be delighted."

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AGAINST HER OWN SOUL.

I.

REGINALD HAYDEN slammed his door, and ran down the steps at full speed on to the pavement. He was always in a hurry.

A lady passing at the moment stepped back, stared at him, and pressed both hands over her heart.

He raised his hat apologetically.

"I beg your pardon, I am afraid I startled you."

He saw before him a blonde in black; to his masculine eye the most charming combination. Her pale face flushed scarlet, and her eyes glittered under her level brows, as they met his in the morning sunshine.

"My nerves are unstrung, or I should not start so violently at nothing," she replied, slightly bending her head, as she passed on rapidly. He watched the lithe young figure turn the corner of the Square, contrasting her with the insignificant and common-place foot passengers hurrying to and fro in the vicinity of South Kensington.

He wished he had not frightened her. It was abominable to startle a pathetic creature with blue eyes and a tremulous smile. Her face haunted him all that morning, and he found himself thinking again and again of the trivial incident on the pavement. Had he followed those quick, even footsteps, he would have seen them flag suddenly, and the graceful form stagger against the nearest railing, clinging to the iron for support. Janette Gilma felt numb from head to foot, as she stood with compressed lips and staring eyes—the victim of overpowering emotion.

"What a fool I am!" she exclaimed at last, loosening her collar, and breathing freely once more. "I see Douglas in everyone—and yet how like!" She glanced back meditatively. "Yes, it was his face, and yet not his face—poor comfort for a starving soul! Why seek the dead among the living?"

She clenched her hands. "No—not the dead!" She repeated the words to herself vehemently, and a strange gleam shot from her tearful eyes. "If he lives," she murmured, "then am I the most miserable among women; and if he is dead——."

Her face blanched with agony. There could be only a long, blank, hopeless "nevermore" in answer to that question.

"Oh, for one look—one word!" she cried pleadingly, renewing her walk under the prosaic shadow of town-built houses. Yet her mind was far away in the fresh air of a Swiss village, laden with the odour of pines. She could see the soft loveliness of tree-clad mountains, and, beyond those, cruel ranges of icy splendour, whose jaws had devoured the joy of her life; while below the white death pinnacles a winding river gleamed in a valley. Passers-by turned to look on the beauty of the girl's set face, but she saw only the eyes of the stranger who had startled her so much in Courtfield Gardens.

II.

ONE of the numerous underground trains had drawn up at Earl's Court Station, and a small crowd rushed down the steps to catch it. Just as the signal came for departure and the gate was closing, a man pushed his way through, springing into the train as it steamed from the platform. The man was Reginald Hayden, and the only other occupant of the carriage oddly enough—Janette Gilma.

As their eyes met they both remembered the incident of the morning, though it was now late in the afternoon.

The girl looked at him with a quiet steady gaze. She was still attired in simple black, and there lurked in her expression a presentiment of evil that he could not understand. Had she some strange mesmeric power in her sweet, grave smile? That unknown influence of the mind which one living being has over another. Could she bend men to her control? Was it personal magnetism, or merely the outward form of physical beauty which quickened his breathing and stirred his blood.

He started visibly as she leant forward and addressed him in a voice whose soft low accents fulfilled the promise of the fair face.

"Excuse me," she said, speaking with effort, "but are you related to Douglas Hayden?"

"Certainly. You know him?" replied Reginald, his interest now actively roused.

Her head fell back on the cushions, her fingers clenched. She was white to the lips, and after a moment's pause, spoke in breathless anxiety.

"Is he alive?" she cried, and her voice rang out through the carriage like the wail of a tortured soul.

"Oh! yes. Douglas is very much alive to-day," he replied. "Did you notice the resemblance between us? We are twin brothers."

"Twin brothers!"

"Yes. Where did you meet him?"

"I will tell you," she continued, passionately, a righteous anger nerving her, in spite of the dull sorrow at her heart. "Last summer I was introduced to him for the first time in Switzerland."

"Ah, I remember, he was away some months."

"We were staying on the borders of a blue lake, and in that summer paradise he awoke the first love of my young life. He won it fairly and honestly, and I confess to it without shame. When I love," looking searchingly at him, "I love *indeed!* There are no half measures. He must have wearied of my devotion—for we were to be married in a little church on the hill side at the close of the following month, when, as I believed, he met his death. He was desperately fond of mountaineering, and left me for a series of excursions, promising to be absent only a week.

"One day I received a letter saying he was just starting on an expedition—without guides, or ropes, or human aid—to see how far he could climb alone. It sounded foolhardy, and I was frightened, but tried to shake off the idea, and forget the danger to which he was recklessly exposing himself. He never returned, and, far up on the edge of a precipice they found his alpenstock, and below, on a sharp rock, his hat, beneath which lay depths unfathomable! The wanderer was lost.

"I tried to believe what they told me; I tried to think for my own sake that he had died on those bleak towers of silence, but I couldn't—I couldn't! Love was still burning in my heart, and again and again it whispered a doubt—a suspicion of the truth. But nevertheless the man I worshipped was verily and indeed separated from me for ever. He was either lifeless in his grave of snow, or else a shameless and hypocritical deceiver, who had cruelly wronged and deserted me.

"I cannot say which alternative was the worst. I have tried to feel resigned, but resignation with some natures is impossible. I have battled against my sorrow night and day, crying out for peace and self-control, but his face is always before me—your face, with the deep set eyes and clear cut features. For Heaven's sake, say if there is any hope for me in the future? What did I do to deserve such treatment?"

"Douglas was always the same," said his brother bitterly. "Changeable and evanescent!—a rolling stone from his boyhood. Forget him if you would hope to find the peace you speak of."

His tone grew suddenly tender and pleading, as the tears welled into Janette's eyes.

"Forget! Is there such a word?"

"Yes—when coupled with youth, health, and beauty."

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"Not till we reach the land where all things are forgotten!"

A touch of poetic dreaminess crept over the girl's face.

"He is not worthy of your remembrance!" declared Reginald, a hot flush upon his brow. "Will you still grieve when I tell you that this very morning I stood by him at the altar rails, and heard him swear everlasting fidelity to another woman?"

"Married—and to-day?" she almost hissed, tottering to her feet, while a horrible contortion passed over her face.

"Will you forget him now?" asked Reginald gravely.

"Yes," she replied with a sharp cry. "Yes, a thousand times yes!"

The man gazed appalled at the face of woe that confronted him. "I will find forgetfulness *here!*"

Her whispered words froze his blood, as an instant later Janette's hand was at the door-fastening. She flung it open, springing upon the step, ready to hurl herself forward into the darkness of the gloomy tunnel. Eternity yawned at her feet, but she only saw the end of misery within her grasp, while her hands, clinging a moment to dear life, relaxed their hold, as she surrendered herself to the pit of destruction and the dust of death. A rushing whirlwind was in her ears, the thunder of a hundred storms seemed booming and bursting in fury over her soul, but that moment's hesitation had saved her, and Reginald's arms were clasping the swaying figure, which now fought for freedom and eternity with almost superhuman strength. Yet Reginald was strong, and maintained his grip round the slim form, dragging her back with a mighty effort.

A convulsive shudder passed over her, as she sank half fainting upon the seat. A deadly snow sleepiness, such as befalls mountaineers, seemed to be creeping through Janette's frame. She fancied herself stumbling over ice-bound rocks, while before her eyes pinnacle upon pinnacle towered in the morning sun. Down a black rift a gleaming glacier hurled its shattered crystals over a deep precipice, in the depths of which a man's face smiled cynically upon the misery of a stricken woman!

Then her eyes opened, and she saw Reginald, radiant with compassion, bending over her. She doubted whether after all she had not been asleep and dreaming from the first, till gradually the sense of her injuries returned, and she started up, burning with indignation.

"Why did you do it?" she asked hoarsely. "I wanted to die. What right had you to stop me?"

A look of yearning stole into the man's face, as he took her little trembling hand with infinite tenderness. His strength in contact with her weakness broke down Janette's cowardly spirit, as he answered in quick unhesitating tones:

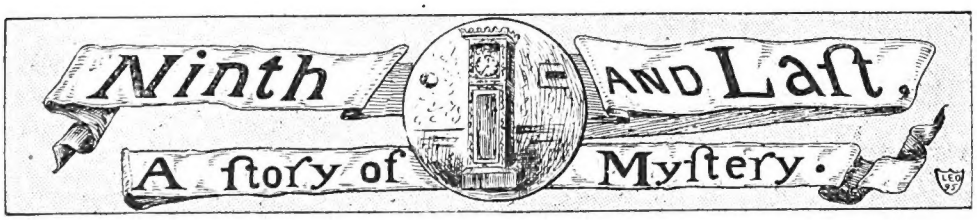
"*Live for me!*"

The three words vibrated with deadly earnestness and sincerity, while he read in her expression a sudden joyful submission.

He knew he could trust her then, and flinging wide the door, pointed to the outer darkness, and the filthy grime of an underground tunnel.

"Here is Life—there is Death," he said. "Choose!"

A sweet smile illuminated the stranger's face—and she chose!



WOULD it astonish you to meet a man who had stepped right out of the heart of the sixteenth century? Not an intangible ghost; but real flesh and blood, clothed in the garments of those far-away times, and trailing down to the present all the symbols and traditions of the Renaissance era of Michel Angelo and Aristo. I met that man and made him my friend. Some might call it a mere illusion; but, if seeing is believing, the touch of the hand, the sound of the voice, and the influence of a great wide-reaching spirit must surely convince me.

Five years ago I returned from four years of research in the furthermost parts of the globe. With my note-books filled with valuable scientific material, I settled upon Paris as a place of residence, and set up my modest *lares* in the cosiest of chambers overlooking a large square in a fashionable part of the city.

I had no more than started upon my solitary labours, when I realised the necessity of a companion—not one of flesh and blood, man or beast, for I was ever a solitary from my earliest days; but something whose companionship I could enjoy without the necessity of reciprocation. Selfish as this now appears to me, I was actuated by the most exacting jealousy of a student nature, ardent in research and zealous in the pursuit of every trifling detail. I ran through the catalogue of man's best friends in solitude, and finally hit upon a grandfather's clock.

I visited several curio dealers, easily finding what I wanted, but at a price beyond my reach. Then I hit upon the expedient of advertising; but for months heard nothing from my little "Want" in a metropolitan daily.

One day—whether in answer to my advertisement or through the kindness of friends, I cannot say—but I received a curious document written upon paper that might have been made during the dark ages; but the chirography was remarkably clear, and in old Italian word-print.

It informed me that a most remarkable clock was to be had at a house in a town thirty miles away. My eyes were riveted on the curious sheet. So quaint an epistle had never before come into my hands. How strange it all was! And what a queer and mystifying aroma clung to it! Naturally, I wondered a long time what manner of man it was that had sent it to me.

The next day I lost no time in making my way to the little town of F——. I took a carriage, for the house of which I was in search stood some distance from the station.

My driver was very taciturn till we reached it, and then he turned his inquiring face upon me, and said, "Sir, you cannot possibly mean there!"

"Yes," I replied; "why not?"

"Mon Dieu!" was all he muttered; then he stopped short, let me out, lashed up his horses, and was out of sight without once glancing back.

I smiled at the coward—partially, I confess, to still the beatings of my own heart—and then surveyed the surroundings. I stood before a bleak stone cottage, half hidden in a jungle of scrub, oaks, and undergrowth, and as bespeaking of life as a crater on the moon. Lest I should be awed by my own gathering chimeras, I leapt the fence—for the gate was secured with a chain of antique make.

Three times I went round that closed and barred house before I found a loophole that looked as if it had ever served a human footstep, and that sort of mantrap led into the cellar. I gave it a quick knock or two with my walking stick, a chill passing over me as the reverberations rumbled through the empty halls and chambers above, like the trump of Gabriel roaring through the catacombs.

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Ten minutes I waited, irresolute, wavering. What manner of being, mortal, or fiend was I to encounter? I was almost in such a state of mental turmoil as to turn tail and run; when, with a parting bang, I brought a step to the other side of the little door. Creaking out a harsh protest, a number of bolts slid back, the portal opened an inch or so, and I was confronted by the most wonderful face that ever man beheld. Never will the recollection of that strange, human, yet superhuman, countenance leave me, so startling was the weird feature, so vivid is the abhorrent memory.

I bore the ordeal of that glittering glance for a moment or two, then thrust the yellow sheet through the crack. A lean hand grasped it, and with a sign of recognition, parted the door to me, as a voice, high-pitched and tremulous with age, entreated, "Come in." Then, with almost trembling step, I passed into the haunted house, and heard the ancient bolts clang behind me.

What an awful transformation! I seemed to have entered another world, another age, another destiny. The very atmosphere was not that of my own clime. It was Italy, yet the Italy I had never known. There was the familiar smoke of Vesuvius mingling with the incense of wild flowers, pervaded still with that subtle spiritual atmosphere of the cloisters and the anchorite's cave temple.

For a moment I could not discern the objects about me with distinctness, and then, one by one, strange forms came out of the dense shadow—a mad confusion of antique missals, globes and retorts, ancient works of art, and implements of every kind of research. At last, in one corner, I beheld the object of my visit—the old clock, tall, gaunt, spectral, and hooded like a Benedictine almsgatherer. Its face was yellow with age, but strangely, startlingly human.

The old man, perceiving me silent and rooted to the floor, beckoned me to a bench, for there were no chairs, and instantly brought me a flagon of red wine, filling a glass and setting it before me. I raised the ancient flagon in my trembling fingers, the aroma of the wine recalling the lava-flavour of the rarest Chianti vintage. "To our bargain, sir!" I murmured faintly, pledging him good health, and draining the glass to the very dregs.

I could sit hours before it in supreme content.

"The clock;" said he, without further ado, as if he wished to rid himself speedily of an unwelcome intruder. "There it is!"

"It is a good specimen. What is its value?"

The old man winced as if the thought of money were an insult in connection with such a treasure. "More than you or any other man can pay," he said calmly, "I will give it to you."

"Give it to me!" I echoed in amazement.

"Yes. I no longer have any use for it here. It belonged to my father—Francesco Guicciardini, the philosopher."

"I know of but one great Guicciardini," I interposed, ransacking my memory; "It was he of whom Charles V. was kind enough to say that he could make a hundred Spanish grandees in a minute, but a Guicciardini comes only once in a century!"

"True! true! But you are a scholar, my friend," cried the old anchorite, his face illumined with a certain joy; "that man was my father."

"But he passed from this earth some three hundred and fifty years ago," I returned, with a smile of indulgence for his seeming error.

"Yes; he was, nevertheless, my father," was the calm and proud-spoken rejoinder. "But the clock; will you take it, my young friend? You will be serving God and man a great end."

I peered into his withered old face, trying to comprehend the mystifying remarks. Then for the first time I perceived the startling resemblance between the ancient heirloom in the corner and the face of this weird type before me. Whether the clock had been fashioned into the features of the man, or the man had grown to look like the gaunt old time-dispenser in the shadow beyond, I could not divine. They were alike as twins.

Half-an-hour later I had promised to take the treasured heirloom upon condition that it should be a loan, not a gift, nor a purchase; and that it was to be restored at the request of the owner. With that understanding I retreated to the door. There the tottering old man held out his lean hand to me. "Before you go," said he, "I want you to make me a solemn promise. It is reasonable."

"Then I will do so with pleasure," said I.

"That you will part with the clock to no one, no matter what happens; at least, till you are as old as I am."

"If it be true that you are the great Guicciardini's son," I said, smiling, "I doubt very much whether I shall live to be your age. Three hundred years is a long life."

"And yet I have proven that it is altogether too short for my herculean labours. For an ephemeris, a day; for a man, three score and ten years; for a philosopher, ages."

"Oh, yes; if we only had the adjusting of these matters," said I, airily. "It seems hard that we should lose a Raphael at thirty-seven, while lunatic asylums are filled with greybeards full of those precious years denied to genius. But as to the clock, I will part with it to no one."

"Upon your honour?"

"Upon my honour, sir."

"Thank you." And with that sepulchral sign of gratitude, spoken with fervency inexplicable, I made my retreat like one who had returned from a visit to shadow land.

Two days later, that tall and stately old treasure was standing in one corner of my own study-chamber—the grim witness of many lifetimes of labour, now ticking out the moments of this new era of a scholar's aspirations.

That night I resumed my work by its companionable chimes, but somehow I could not seem to collect my thoughts. A new spirit seemed to have entered this sanctuary of the muse, and entirely made me prisoner. I tried many expedients to collect and record my ideas; but they all baffled me.

I began to think that perhaps the old clock was my bane, and more than once I wished it back in the haunted house of F——. But when that dreary night had passed, the longer the ancient heirloom was my solitary friend through bleak days and wintry nights, the greater was its fascination over me. I feared it; yet that fear was not without a mingling of genuine affection. I found that I could sit hours before it in supreme content, completely hypnotised, irredeemably its captive.

With this strange spiritual influence, there came a certain unmistakable physical alteration which was too convincing to be waved aside as an illusion. I felt that I was growing old. Though not yet thirty, the years began to rain upon me, it seemed, with the very hours.

There was a perceptible halt in my walk after the first week, and crow-foot wrinkles began mapping the land of maturity over my forehead. My skin was drying up like parchment, and so positive was the change that even my best friends began to pass me in the street unknowingly. Doctors shook their heads; it was inexplicable. One night I sat by my

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hearth pondering upon this alarming state of things, when I looked up at the old clock as it chimed out the midnight hour. Returning my glance again, I caught the reflection of my own face in the mirror at my right, and my heart leapt up.

Heavens! I was growing to look like the old clock!

In amazement and dread, I bent down and covered my face with my hands. I had read that men will often grow to resemble animals, and even inanimate objects with which they are in daily contact; and that, after years of constant companionship, husband and wife, or brother and sister, grow to resemble each other to a wonderful degree.

Again I glanced furtively into the glass, and again the awful similitude staggered me. The old clock had then a very demon's power. It had made the former owner like its very self; now I was to be the victim. The venerable scholar and myself then were brothers in more than kindred sentiments.

After a sleepless night, I arose early, called the *concierge*, and told him that, as I intended to go out on the Seine that day, I might not return before nightfall. Then I started for F——, resolved then and there to compel the old man to take back his odious gift.

I found him there, alone still, just as if three months had not intervened since my last visit. The same chaos of scientific instruments, the same atmosphere of ancient Italy, the same hospitality. But when my host came closer to me, I found that he was at least twenty years younger in appearance. His step was more steady, his voice had lost that quiver, and he was like one brought back from the very verge of the tomb. I pledged him my health once more, then told him frankly that I was going to send back his clock the following day. He did not seem surprised.

"But your oath, Signore; your oath."

True. I had promised on my honour to part with it to no one under any circumstances, "till I was as old as he was." Then I felt the wrinkles with my finger-tips.

"Verily, it will not be long, then," I murmured.

Once more he filled the glass, and then I left him. I went straight home. It was raining hard. As I came into the lower hall, the *concierge* paused long enough in his lamp-lighting to inform me that "the old gentleman had just gone up ahead of me."

I looked at him blankly. "What old gentleman?"

"Why the old man who lives with you up there."

I stared at him a moment in silence, then passed up.

"Poor fellow! He is losing his mind."

Entering my chambers, I was astonished to see wet foot-prints near the door. I turned the gas up and examined them. They were not my own. Besides, there was only one key, and that was mine. No; there was another, when I came to think of it; it was in the little drawer of the cabinet. Hastily I drew the drawer forth, and took the mate-key in my hands. It was cold, and there was a spot of mud upon it. My brain whirled. Burglars!

Taking down a brace of pistols, I loaded them stealthily and with care, and started on the exploration. Every conceivable nook, that could hide an intruder, was ransacked; but no burglar could be found. Then I laughed away my fears, ate a light supper, and retired. The next day the old fascination, the old horror, and the dreaded yielding up of a something within me, was resumed, with now no power to escape or forfend it. The old clock was my Nemesis.

After another three months of this torture, I made a second call upon my old friend at F——. I say "old," but that is not by any means the truth. The vigour of a man in the very prime of life was in his veins. That sallow, parchment skin now blushed with the fire and zeal of youth, and he was the deformed transformed.

In consternation I gazed at him—I who had now long passed the prime of life in thought, feeling, and indeed in physical reality. I spoke of the old clock, my voice broken and tremulous; but he put me off with a jest, which sounded all the more horrible in that place dedicated to the severest meditations and pursuits. Sadly then I went back to my chambers, a dog whipped back to his kennel, and resigned myself like one of the Christian martyrs of old.

For four months longer I endured this ordeal. One night, after pondering before my fire till after midnight, I drew the cork from a bottle of my favourite port, filled a glass and tried to drink; but somehow, the old taste was gone. I laid it aside and tried to read; but my eyes watered like those of an old man.

"Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything!" Oh, how bitterly those words piped out in the still midnight! I no longer resisted. Like a child upon the swift-rushing waters of life, I was borne along, unknowing, careless of all the future had in store.

I went to bed; but sleep was not for me. An hour later, I arose and lighted the gas, stirring the dying embers. Oh, the beating of that hollow and mysterious heart in its worm-eaten prison-house—"tick-tock, tick-tock." Would it ever cease? Suddenly I stood before the table, staring at the glass and the dusty bottle. The wine was gone—all of it! I was stunned. My eyes turned towards the door. Had anyone come in? No; the bolts were fast. So—I had drunk the wine myself, and had forgotten it! I was losing memory—that last sweet friend of friendless age.

Resignedly I put out the light, and started to go back to my couch; but the ticking of the old spectre stayed me. Oh, had I but the power to still its awful pulse ere it silenced my own! What a triumph would that be! What a victory! Noiselessly I struggled over towards it, stood one instant before the gaunt spectre, and hesitated.

That moment of hesitancy was my defeat; for the old fascination stole over me, as if in tender homage to one I loved beyond earth and had given up my life to endure, I put my shrunken arms around it, and laid my head confidingly, resignedly upon its beating heart. Suddenly the blood shot into my temples. Heavens! What was that?—*Breathing!*

A wild moan broke from my lips, my limbs gave way beneath me, and I fell, half fainting to the floor. Then and there in the faint moonlight that streamed through the lattice, I beheld the form of a young man emerge from the very bowels of the old clock and approach me.

"That makes the ninth!" he ejaculated. I stared at him helplessly.

"What! You do not know me? Let me enlighten you;" and with the grim jest, he turned on the gas, full blaze; and I saw it was the mysterious old man of the haunted house at F——, but now a young man of thirty, glowing with health, radiant, daring. "You are the ninth, I say."

"What do you mean? Who are you, and what do you want here?" I cried.

"Did you yourself not ask me how it was that I could be the son of a medical philosopher, three hundred and fifty years of age, and still live? Behold! I have achieved it, as all great things are done in this world, by the sacrifice of the many to the triumph of the few. It took five million lives to make a Napoleon, ten million were sacrificed to make a Cæsar. Philosophy is not so exacting; but it requires a thousand life-times to achieve the absolute, a thousand in succession. My father's legacy to me was this great problem unsolved.

"But he also left me this clock of the Fathers, in which time runs backward at hundred-fold speed to one concealed within, providing there can be found a willing sacrifice. You were that sacrifice. But think to what greater good than all your little life could achieve, this sacrifice has been. Good night, my friend! You have done well, and have my blessing. I shall send for the old clock when you are dead. It must serve me many another lifetime yet. Good night."

I listened to his sprightly and familiar footsteps as they echoed on the stair. So! The last of youth and hope were gone, and only the hulk remained. Yes, but the ninth sacrifice shall be the last, though the absolute be near attained. Struggling to my feet, with almost superhuman effort, I raised the window to my right—wide, wide open. Then I began rocking the old spectre in the corner, till, with one mighty effort, I hurled the demon over against the window, where it wavered a moment, and fell out crashing to the pavement below, dashed to a thousand pieces.

Just then I heard a wild wail in the distance and the hurrying of feet; and when I leaned over the window-casement and gazed down, I saw a young man bending over the fragments, wringing his hands and sobbing.

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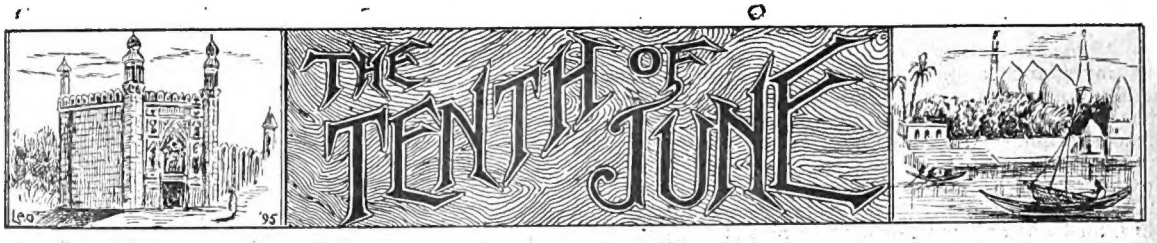

By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.—Illustrated by* Raymond Potter.

SUMMARY.

Geoffrey Dundas—A young barrister.
Sir Arthur Chetwynd—A retired general and Geoffrey's friend.
Leila Chetwynd—His daughter.
Captain Byngham—An army officer, and cousin to Sir Arthur.
Lord Lavington—A friend of the General.
Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore—A Hindoo prince who visits Sir Arthur, and develops an unrequited love for Leila.
Chunder Sen—The Rajah's secretary.
Kuttapani—The Rajah's cook.

During the Indian Mutiny Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead), took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple on the tenth of June, and on this day every year afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned, or some member of their families, is assassinated. On the last day of May, 1884, Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore, visits Sir Arthur, and Geoffrey tells him of the danger which threatens himself and the General's household. In view of the condition of affairs, Sir Arthur visits his lawyer to make his will, and, learning from him that his cousin, Captain Byngham, to whom he had intended to marry Leila, is almost penniless, though representing himself to be rich, wills him but a small annuity. Chunder Sen makes it possible for Byngham to surreptitiously examine the will, and promises to help him out of the difficulty.

CHAPTER X.

A Queer Mephistopheles.

It was the morning of Friday, the ninth of June, the day when the strangely assorted party brought together at Seacombe Towers, was to disperse.

Lord Lavington's yacht, the *Aurora*, was to sail at dawn next morning; and her owner had considerately telegraphed to the General to say that a boat would be waiting for him and Miss Chetwynd, so that they might come on board at any hour that suited them. This made it unnecessary for the General to hurry the departure of any of his guests.

Emily and Jane Stoddart were the first to go. They left soon after breakfast, highly delighted with their visit.

"I have enjoyed myself *so* much, dear!" cried Emily as she stood in the hall with one of Leila's hands clasped in both her own. "Good-bye!" [Kiss on right cheek.] "And so has Jane. And we hope you will have a *lovely* time on the yacht. I feel sure you will." [Kiss on left cheek.] "And you'll come and tell us all about it, dear, the moment you come back; now, *won't* you?" [Kiss on right cheek.] "Good-bye again, dear!" [Kiss on left cheek.]

The Rajah stood regarding this exhibition with an expression of mild interest. It was to him another example of the incomprehensible nature of the Occidental races. Probably he never suspected that the scene was partly enacted for his benefit.

"Good-bye."

He shook hands with Emily with a cold, grave politeness. Jane thought that when her turn came there was a look of respectful, and almost tender, regret in his fine, dark eyes. She herself was forced to drop her own eyes; and that blush which had been a plague to her from her early girlhood covered her brow and cheeks.

In the Hindoo's eyes the blush greatly enhanced the girl's good looks; and she felt that there was something like admiration in his look as he watched them depart. If Jane Stoddart had been accused of being in love with the Hindoo, she would have denied it with fierce indignation, and without any feeling that she was untruthful or deceiving herself. But the Rajah was the most interesting man she had ever seen. He was the most dignified, the most gentle, the best bred, not even excepting Sir Arthur Chetwynd. She felt some regret that his skin was not white, but she felt no repulsion from him because it was dark. "And after all," as she had said to herself more than once, "if he had been an ordinary white man, he wouldn't have been half so—not half so interesting."

None of the others were to go before lunch. An hour after breakfast, Captain Byngham, having finished his packing, went out on the terrace and began to walk up and down. He had a cigar in his hand, but he did not think of lighting it. He was too much agitated. His heart beat strangely as he glanced from time to time at the hall door, half desiring, half fearing the secretary's appearance.

He felt almost as though he were about to make an alliance with the Evil One. But he was a desperate man. His creditors had only been restrained by the expectation he had held out to them that he was about to marry an heiress, and that as soon as the marriage had taken place they would be paid in full. But of this he had little hope now.

Leila had been unaccountably cold to him whenever he had tried to "make the running," as he expressed it to himself. He had little doubt that he would have been able to overcome her coldness if, as he had hoped, Sir Arthur had been definitely on his side. But from the moment of the General's return from Plymouth, Byngham had been conscious of a change in his host's manner, and the will explained that clearly enough. The General must in some way have come to know of his embarrassments. It was vain to hope that he would consent to take a ruined man for his son-in-law.

It was more by a sort of superstition than by any exercise of his reason that Byngham had resolved to accept the Hindoo's offer of help. It would be a relief, he felt, to confide in some one. But, in addition to this, he had a vague feeling, natural to a man of his temperament, that Oriental cunning might do something for him.

He despised all dark coloured races; but there was something about the quiet reserve, the air of conscious, silent power that distinguished the Hindoos which fascinated him. He knew now that the Secretary was a thoroughly unscrupulous man, and at the same time clever, with a sort of supernatural cleverness. The incident of opening the envelope, simple as it had been, had impressed the Englishman with a strong sense of the Indian's power over difficulties. And that was what he wanted—a man who would face a desperate situation with cool confidence in his own power.

What the Hindoo meant to do for him he had no idea. He only knew that he would fight, if at all, by dark and underhand methods. Perhaps the Hindoo was gifted with the mysterious power of mesmerism. Perhaps he was prepared to suggest and carry out a forgery. What the means might be he could not tell. But something in the dark, inscrutable eyes

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The Hindoo was standing behind him.

had told him that what the will behind these eyes resolved to do would be done.

The time was passing.

Still the Hindoo did not come. The Captain glanced for the twentieth time at his watch, and stamped his foot impatiently. A muttered curse was on his lips, when he started, and the words died away half spoken. The Hindoo was standing behind him.

"What do you come stealing on a fellow like that for?" he growled.

The Hindoo smiled deprecatingly, and said nothing.

From the spot where they stood Leila's white dress was visible, as she stood in the garden talking to the Rajah.

"Come away from this public place if you want to talk to me," the Captain said impatiently. He felt as if he could not say what he had to say when Leila's pure eyes might any moment be turned on him.

Still without speaking, Chunder Sen led the way across the lawn to a bench which was sheltered by some thick laurels from observation. Here they sat down, and Captain Byngham, affecting a carelessness he was far from feeling, lighted his cigar.

"Very good of you to say you'd help me," he began, by way of making up for his recent rudeness. "But I don't think you can—unless," he added, with a laugh, "you are prepared to advance a good round sum of money on particularly poor security. The fact is, I have been looking forward to marrying Miss Chetwynd, who, of course, will have all Sir Arthur's money, and who, you are aware, is a cousin of my own. A marriage with her would have cleared off my most pressing debts, and in time I could have cleared my estates of incumbrances."

"Well, somehow or other Sir Arthur has heard of my difficulties; and his way of helping me is to cut me out of his will—confound him! Also his daughter gets nothing, or only a small annuity, if she marries without his consent, or that of his trustees. That means me. He won't give his consent now. I've seen it in his eye plainly enough these last two days; and you may bet that he will leave instructions to his trustees that *they* don't give their consent.

"Now you have the whole story. Simple enough, isn't it? I'm in a pretty hole; and if you can help me out of it, Mr. Sen, you'll be the cleverest man I've yet met with."

The Hindoo made no response. He sat, not looking at his companion, but at a tree that grew opposite, with a grave impassive look, as if he had been at church.

Byngham, watching him, saw his eyes gradually contract, as if he were concentrating his mental powers. At length he spoke.

"This is the ninth of June," he said, in his usual soft, even tones. "Would it be possible for you to keep the situation unchanged till this day twelve months?"

"Well," answered Byngham, after a pause, "to some extent, yes. I had a letter to-day from my solicitors proposing a scheme suggested by some of the mortgagees, which would practically have that effect. I might go and live quietly abroad, tell them I meant to retrench. I fancy it might be managed—why do you ask?"

"Because we go to the United States, my master and I. We go to Europe. But next June we shall be back here again. Then I may be able to help you."

"How?"

"That I cannot tell."

"Do you mean you *won't* tell, or that you don't know?"

Chunder Sen slowly turned on his companion a look in which there was something of contempt.

"I do not pretend to make plans twelve months in advance," he said.

"I don't believe you have any plan, or ever could have," burst out Byngham. "The thing is impossible. Sir Arthur won't give his consent as long as he lives. And even if—even after his death, you know, we should have the same difficulty with the trustees."

"I know," said the Secretary quietly.

"And you still think it possible that I may not only marry my cousin, but inherit the estates?"

"I do."

This was said with such calm confidence that Byngham was silenced—awed. The Hindoo spoke like a man who was conscious of possessing supernatural powers.

"The will," said Byngham, dropping his voice, "has been sent off by post. The lawyer will have it this afternoon, and it will be locked up in his safe."

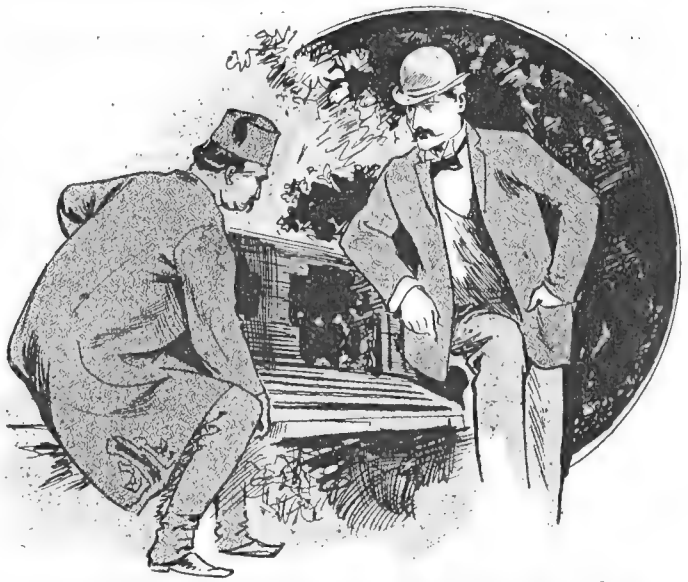
"And what of that?"

The Englishman's eyes fell. He had nothing to say.

"You had better not live abroad, at least for the first half of next year," said Chunder Sen, in grave, even tones. "You may live in London, or anywhere, so long as you visit with tolerable frequency at Sir Arthur's house. Can you preserve the entry, I mean the *entrée*, to his house for twelve months?"

"I suppose so," said the Captain sulkily. He did not relish being ordered about in this fashion.

"It is absolutely necessary that you should do so, and that you should keep me well informed of the General's movements. Without such information it would be impossible for me to make plans for the carrying out of your wishes."



The Hindoo spoke like a man who was conscious of possessing supernatural powers.

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"Shall we buy what is our own?"

"What plans?"

"Plans that may suggest themselves by this day next year," said the Hindoo, his eyes fixed full on the Captain's face.

"Bah!"

The Secretary gravely rose.

"If you do not want me," he said, "if you do not trust me, I can go."

"Heaven knows I want you badly enough. Sit down, man. Yes, I want you, and I trust you. At least, I'm sure if anyone can help me, you can."

"But you must see that in order to do so I must know something of Sir Arthur—more than I know already. I must know his habits, his temperament, his amusements, his visits, his movements. I must learn what people have influence with him; what his plans are concerning his daughter, and—and a thousand other things—everything you can tell me."

"All right."

"An address will be sent you, to which you can write as necessity arises."

"Very good."

"As the time for our next visit draws near, it may be necessary for me to see you. You will not object to meet me at a place I may appoint, as it may be impossible for me to call on you."

"No, I don't mind doing that."

"And in return for this service——."

"Ah!" sneered the Captain, "I thought that was coming!"

"The Captain," said Chunder Sen, "being a Christian, is no doubt accustomed to give and to receive important and difficult services out of pure love—pure Christian charity. With me it is different. I am only a poor Hindoo——."

"There, that'll do!"

"And, being such, I naturally expect some small return for my labour."

"What do you call a small return?"

"Merely your promise that when this house and all it contains, and all this land, and Sir Arthur's wealth——."

"Yes, yes."

"When it is all yours, you will permit me or my friends to search in Sir Arthur's desk and his drawers for certain stones—uncut gems, in fact—of no great price in money, but valuable to us from their sacred character. They were stolen some years ago from a shrine. I believe Sir Arthur has them."

"Why not ask him for them?"

"Do you think that if I did he would restore them? No."

"He might sell them."

"And shall we buy what is our own? No!"

"You'd rather st—— search for them yourselves. Very good. I've no objection. If ever I am master here, you may search the house for jewels, cut or uncut, and keep all you can find."

The Hindoo rose, ratified the compact with a quiet "We are agreed;" and walked a little further into the wooded part of the park.

And Captain Byngham, delighted to have secured the Hindoo's help at such a very moderate cost, stepped off rapidly in the contrary direction.

The interview with Mephistopheles had not been nearly so unpleasant as he had anticipated.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECOND BLOW FALLS.

THE General drove his friends to the railway-station in a large wagonette. He was in high spirits; for the anxiety which had been weighing on his mind since he first heard that Hindoos were to be under his roof on the fatal Tenth of June was now gone.

"Another hour," he said to himself, "and I shall be free of them, for another year at all events."

The train in which Sir Arthur and Leila had to travel to Plymouth started some time before the one which was to convey the Rajah and his suite to London. Captain Byngham said he had to meet some man at Plymouth on business, and that he would see the General and Leila off.

The girl was wild with delight at the prospect of a cruise. She had never been on board a yacht in her life; and felt as if she could have sung a song at the top of her voice out of pure joy of heart. The last sight the Rajah and Geoffrey got of her, she was leaning a little way out of the carriage window, smiling farewell, and mischievously fluttering a tiny morsel of handkerchief.

The two men stood gazing after the train in silence. Neither of them cared to speak, for each knew that the other understood the feelings with which he was staring at the fast-vanishing carriages. To Geoffrey it seemed as if the brightness and spring of his life had suddenly been withdrawn.

"Shall I have the pleasure of your company to London?" asked the Rajah at length.

"No; I think not," answered Geoffrey. "The fact is," he added a moment later, "I have not yet made up my mind where to go."

Amavati looked at the young Englishman with his grave, dark eyes.

"To-morrow is the Tenth of June," he said almost in a whisper.

"I know. But now that I am warned I can look after myself," said Geoffrey. Then, thinking that his answer might seem cold, he added, "I am awfully obliged to you for your interest in me."

This the Rajah only acknowledged by a bow, as he turned away to speak to his Secretary, who just then approached.

Fluttering a tiny morsel of handkerchief.

Left to himself, Geoffrey began to ask himself seriously where he meant to spend the night and the following day. He had a feeling that he would be safer away from London and his old haunts there. Suddenly he formed a resolution to spend the next two days in some sequestered spot among the Welsh mountains. His nerves wanted

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rest. He needed the refreshment that contact with the everlasting hills alone can give.

He went to the booking office, and purchased a ticket for Bristol.

"I shall go some part of the way with you, at all events, if I may," he said, when he rejoined the Rajah on the platform. "I haven't yet settled where I shall spend the night, but we can travel together as far as Bristol, at all events."

"I shall be delighted to have your company," said Amavati quietly.

Even now Geoffrey could hardly tell whether he trusted and liked the Rajah or not. He felt at once attracted and repelled by him.

They travelled together as far as Bristol, very little being said on the journey. At that place they parted; and as Geoffrey took the Rajah's slender fingers in his own he was oppressed with the feeling that he had not done this man justice, nor given him a proper return in gratitude for the warnings he had given him. He felt sorry for the prince, he could not have told why.

From the western seaport Geoffrey travelled on into Wales, spent the night at a little railway hotel on the way, and found himself next morning at Llignfail, a small village among the Welsh mountains.

It was a glorious summer day. The hills lifted their blue heads into the sky, as if they were calmly rejoicing in the splendour of the sunlight, and in the deep peace which reigned among them. The very sight of them was invigorating.

Geoffrey finished his breakfast at the village hostelry, slung the small bag he carried over his shoulder—he had left his heavy luggage at Bristol—and set off for a long ramble among the solitudes beyond. In his bag there was a paper of sandwiches made up by the landlady, as well as some biscuits and cheese, so that he felt independent of inns for the time being.

He had a half-formed project of crossing the range of hills to the west and reaching a village called Aberyllis, which, the landlady had told him, lay beyond them. He might spend the Sunday there. It didn't much matter whether he reached Aberyllis, or some other hamlet, or merely a farmhouse where he could find shelter for the night.

He reached the highest point visible from Llanfail soon after noon; but higher peaks then appeared; and his heart longed, with a longing which only the young and strong can ever know, to set foot on the top of them. So he climbed on, till he reached the shoulder of one of the largest peaks.

Hitherto Geoffrey had not met a soul, but he had noticed that he was not quite alone, even in these solitudes. The figure of a man had once or twice been visible in the distance, sometimes behind him, but occasionally on his right or left. It seemed as if another tourist were trying, like himself, to cross the hills to Aberyllis.

For some time he had not seen the stranger, and he concluded that his fellow-traveller must have taken another route.

It was now one o'clock, and it occurred to Geoffrey that before beginning the ascent of the peak which rose, bare and grey, before him, he had better stop and have some lunch. He had just crossed a narrow ravine through which a mountain torrent dashed; but, being unwilling to retrace his steps, he went on, skirting the base of the peak, till he came to a small stream. This just suited him, so he sat down, unslung his bag from his shoulder, and began his meal.

He was sitting on the bare rock, which was of a crumbling character, and just there rather steep. A few feet below him was a pool of inky blackness. This pool was of considerable size, perhaps seventy or eighty yards in length. It had evidently been formed by the rainwater, which in winter rushed down the hillside, and it seemed to be tolerably deep. The black colour of the water was due, no doubt, to the peaty soil at the bottom.

The rock shelved right into the dark-coloured water. At the farther end of the pool there were a few islets, bearing tufts of rushes and of heather. At the margin, except at the side where it met the rock, the pool lost itself in marshy ground, half water covered with green scum, half peaty moss, among which great white boulders appeared at intervals.

Beyond the marshy ground, on the side opposite to Geoffrey, was an upland moor, which stretched downward to the lower slopes of the hills. Further away were the tops of low hills, the shapes of which were lost in the misty horizon.

The silence was profound. Not a bird chirped; not an insect hummed. The landscape was not beautiful; yet Geoffrey felt as if these sterile wastes had a meaning, and even a beauty, of their own. The very contrast between the black morass, the grey rock, the boulders bleached white by the storms of countless winters, and the green fields of fertile Devon, charmed and delighted his eyes.

The young man had finished eating, and was in the act of stooping down to the rivulet which flowed at his side, when he heard a slight noise behind him.

He looked up, and saw a gigantic figure towering above him—a Hindoo with swarthy face, and a look of malignant triumph in his staring black eyes. His arms were raised above his head as high as he could stretch them, and in his two hands was a piece of rock as large as a man could lift!

One instant Geoffrey was motionless, less from terror than

His arms were raised above his head.

amazement. The next he started to his feet, slipped on the smooth, steep rock, and in the fraction of a second was plunged into the pool! It was well for him that his foot had slipped. If he had retained his footing, that moment would have been his last. The Hindoo had been in the very act of heaving the stone. It came down with an awful crash on the very spot where the intended victim had been stooping to drink, and then shot into the pool.

Geoffrey soon rose to the surface, for he was a first-rate swimmer, and perfectly at home in the water. With one hand he dashed the peaty water from his eyes, and there he saw Kuttapani, the man who had been at the Towers in the position of cook to the Rajah, standing on the brink, an evil smile upon his face, and an eager look, like that of a beast of prey when he has fixed his quarry, beaming from his eyes.

Geoffrey was for the moment maddened with rage. To think that he, who had done nothing to deserve it, should be hunted down like a wild animal in this way! He saw the enormous advantage which his enemy possessed—standing in safety on dry ground, and ready to fall on him the moment he

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emerged from the water; but he did not think of that. He could think of nothing but his passionate longing to get within striking distance of that grinning, murderous wretch.

Three rapid strokes took him to the edge of the pool.

Quick as lightning the Indian stooped and sprang—not at him, but a piece of broken rock which was lying a few yards off.

Luckily Geoffrey's presence of mind returned to him. It was plain that long before he could drag himself up that steep slippery bank, out of the pool, his skull would be battered in!

He touched the rock with his foot as Kuttapani stooped for the stone, and shot himself far out across the inky surface.

Before the impetus he had gained was quite exhausted the stone came down. Geoffrey made a convulsive struggle to avoid it; but he could not quite get out of its way. The thing was impossible. The piece of rock struck the water which covered his right shoulder. A cry of pain burst from the young man's lips, as he was driven below the surface by the force of the blow.

Geoffrey at that moment gave himself up for lost; for the thought had darted into his mind—"What is to prevent the Hindoo from stoning me to death by degrees? I must come up to breathe; and as often as I do that I shall be struck down."

But the next instant hope revived. His left foot touched the bottom—soft spongy moss, it is true, not firm ground; but yet the mere contact rested his muscles, and gave him a sensation of having found a friend. He could hardly swim now, on account of his injured shoulder; but he thought he might contrive to walk under water for a few paces. And he actually did manage to struggle on for two or three yards before he was forced to rise for air.

He did so, fully expecting that as he gasped for breath he would be struck on the head by a stone. But the looked for blow did not fall; and ere he sank again Geoffrey glanced round. The Hindoo was still on the edge of the pool, but his back was turned towards the water, and he was stooping down—probably trying to find a stone of suitable size. Geoffrey sank without a sound; and as soon as his feet touched the ground he began to walk away towards the further side of the pool.

He scrambled round it.

Dashed on as fast as he could.

He had hardly taken three steps when he heard a great splash behind him—then another, and another. He pressed on, and to his delight he found that the ground became firmer as he advanced, and—what was still better—it was rising. The water was getting shallower very rapidly.

Suddenly he remembered that at that moment the Hindoo was in all likelihood stooping to gather more stones. He must rise to breathe soon. Better to rise now!

He risked it; and even in the few seconds his head was above water he noticed three things, all of them favourable to his escape.

In the first place, the Hindoo was busy trying to dislodge a large piece of rock—apparently only small stones were lying near at hand—and was not looking at the pool. In the second place, the water, naturally black from the decomposed peat, had become positively thick from being so much disturbed. For anyone standing on the shore to see into it was impossible. Thirdly, he was not very far from a large boulder which stood out of the water, and which he had hitherto taken to be part and parcel of the opposite bank. If he could only——

He looked back to the Indian. He was straightening himself up. Geoffrey sank in silence like a stone.

The breath he carried down with him lasted till he reached the boulder. He scrambled round it, and rose to the surface on the other side of it. He had hardly done so when he again heard the sound of large stones splashing into the water. It seemed as if the Hindoo had some vague notion that his quarry might be still alive, and that he wanted to drive him to the surface.

Geoffrey now rested his hands on the side of the boulder, and being able to breathe freely felt comparatively comfortable for a minute or so; then the leaden weight of his clothes became intolerable. He could not keep his hold on the stone, and he was fain to take a long breath and sink to the bottom for the sake of giving his muscles a few seconds rest. Then it struck him—this boulder cannot be the top of a pillar; on one of its sides there must be a slope, and that slope must be under water.

A few minutes' investigation proved that he was right. The top of the boulder was, in fact, like the nose of a great seal lying on the surface of the sea. Geoffrey got upon the back of the seal, as it were, and lay there at full length, his head being concealed by the top of the boulder, and his body by the black water. He was now able to examine his injured shoulder a little. He did so, and soon assured himself that no bones were broken. It was stiff and sore, but he felt sure that it would be all right in a day or two.

Next Geoffrey began to calculate his chances of escape. There were two chances against him. If the Hindoo took it into his head to walk round the pool, he could hardly avoid being seen; if he took it into his head to go higher up the hill and look down upon the pool, he would certainly be detected.

Would Kuttapani go round the pool, or would he climb the hill, or would he go quietly away?

Kuttapani did none of the three. He sat down where Geoffrey had sat a quarter of an hour before, drew in his

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feet till his knees were nearly up to his eyes, threw his arms round his legs, and sat there, staring at the black water, and waiting.

As minute after minute went by without the Hindoo moving, Geoffrey began to wonder whether he was only making sure that he had struck and drowned his victim, or whether the man was fascinated and unable to leave the scene of his crime. He sat there so long that Geoffrey feared that he must soon either betray himself to his enemy or perish of cold.

But at last there was a slight noise. The Hindoo had risen. Geoffrey waited a few seconds, and then peered cautiously through the heather that grew on the top of the rock that sheltered him.

Then, for one awful moment, the young Englishman was motionless from despair. Kuttapani was standing a little way from the pool, looking full at him. No! Though a stranger would have said that the two men were looking right into each other's faces, Geoffrey had remained invisible. The heather had been a perfect screen. The next moment the Hindoo had turned his back on the pool, and was striding rapidly away.

Geoffrey drew himself out of the pool, and, crouching behind a boulder on dry land, tried to wring the water out of his clothes. His teeth were chattering; he was shivering in every limb.

Suddenly, as he knelt there on the wet peat-moss, an idea flashed into his brain and sent the blood tingling through every vein in his body.

He had been deliberating with himself whether he should try to keep the Hindoo in sight, with a view of bringing him to justice; but now he asked himself—Why should I stoop to punish this poor, ignorant creature, who is very likely the mere tool of spirits more wicked than himself? At most it would rid us of one of our enemies.

Why should I not follow him, and make him my guide to the haunts of those murderers? I may be able to watch them unseen, and, it may be, learn their plans and baffle their designs.

I am safe from them now, for they believe me to be dead. Let the world, too, believe that I am dead. I have few—or none—to mourn me. But I will run those bloodhounds to earth yet! I will try whether I cannot shield Leila and her father by attacking their enemies!

A moment after his plan was formed Geoffrey strode out boldly on the moor, a new light in his eye, a new spring in his step.

Far down the hillside there was a moving figure.

"How did Kuttapani manage to get so near me without being seen?" Geoffrey asked himself. The answer lay before him. A ravine, which formed the bed of a stream, led straight up the side of the hill to a point not far from the spot where he had eaten his midday meal. The Hindoo must have crept up by the stream, sheltered at first by the over-hanging banks, and afterwards working his way through the boulders and tall heather.

By the time Geoffrey had wrung the water out of his clothes, Kuttapani was a long way in advance. So the young Englishman plunged into the ravine, and dashed on as fast as he could, running where the ground was comparatively smooth, and where it was rough leaping from one mossy stone to another.

The hunted man had become the hunter!

(To be continued.)

To me, at least, Roger Elbe was a very interesting character. He was the most systematic and accurate person I ever met, but there was an element of poetry in his nature which enabled him to tell a story so vividly as to make his audience feel that they were witnessing the events he related.

He might easily, I am sure, have secured and filled a much higher and more lucrative position than that of a division engineer, employed by the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company to superintend the construction of its line through some of the most difficult passes of the Rocky and Selkirk Mountains, but he chose this outdoor life because his physical condition required it.

His health was not vigorous. He had an excellent physique, but his nerves were unstrung. Usually he kept them under control, but any sudden surprise or prolonged worry caused him to lose command of himself. I have known him to drop a valuable instrument when a long silence was broken by the sudden caw of a crow over his head. Once, as he was quietly writing, he sprang suddenly to his feet and overturned the table before him when some snow dropped from a pine-tree down upon our tent.

One day it was necessary to make measurements and observations on the face of a high cliff, from a point about midway between its base and its top. Several of our men volunteered to go down, but Elbe said he wished to examine the character of the rock, and would go himself.

Fastening a rope about his waist, whistling loudly meanwhile, he bade the men lower him down the cliff, while I stood at its edge to watch for signals that he might make.

He stopped on a projecting ledge, secured a footing, and then set deliberately to work. After making a few measurements he took out his field-book, apparently to record the figures. A second later he reeled as though he had received a blow, and, dropping his book, grasped the rope, and shouted hoarsely to be drawn up.

In less than a minute he was drawn to the top of the cliff, but as we carried him back from its brink he appeared to be completely unnerved. His teeth were clinched, he glared wildly about him, and great drops of sweat stood out upon his pallid face.

However, he soon regained self-control, the colour returned to his face, and nervously untying the rope from his waist, he said, in a weak, hesitating way:

"Boys, I was not afraid of your letting me drop, but I can't keep my wits in a place like that. I'll tell you the reason when you get back to camp. Finish the work without me, but don't any of you go down there if you have the least objection to going. No, no, there is no need that any of you should go back to the camp with me. I am all right now."

After the work was finished the other men took the instruments back to camp, and I made a *détour* down through the gorge to get the book that Elbe had dropped.

Some of the leaves had become loosened by the fall, and in collecting them I noticed that it was evidently quite an old book. The first few pages were filled with ordinary engineering computations, observations about weather, vegetation, geological formations, and the like. Then there was a leaf on which the distance passed over by a falling body in five seconds was carefully calculated.

On one of the leaves I picked up was a computation which

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at first I thought had something to do with the velocity of a slow current of water that we had encountered, but soon concluded that the moving body, whatever it was, travelled even too slowly for that.

Ere long I found other puzzling computations, all of which appeared to have been made for the purpose of establishing the fact that something would occur at "ten minutes past four o'clock, p.m."

Next I found a leaf on which was a rough drawing of a little child, with curly hair and folded hands, lying in a coffin.

It dawned upon me that I must have been examining private papers instead of an ordinary field-book, and so, restraining my curiosity, I gathered what other leaves I could find, and hastened back to camp.

That night, as we were seated outside the tents around a blazing fire, Elbe told his story. So vivid was the impression made upon my mind that I think I can repeat it very nearly in his own words.

"Boys," he said, "I was in this region several years ago, long before it was definitely known that Kicking Horse would be the pass chosen to run the line through. We came up the Columbia in the summer, and spent the winter over in the Big Bend, making our usual observations, and preparing for a regular survey of the region.

"One morning early in April I started from our camp to spend part of the day hunting goats. I soon came upon the tracks of a small herd and followed them. At first the way led up a small cañon; then it turned towards some peaks and high cliffs that form a part of the south wall of the Illecillewaet Pass.

"About three hours of zigzag climbing brought me to the summit of the ridge, when the falling of a rock that I carelessly displaced alarmed the goats, and they bounded away. As they disappeared among the ice-drifts I fired two shots after them.

"The next moment I regretted this, for as the echoes rattled among the crags I was sure that every goat and mountain sheep within five miles would be on the alert the rest of the day. However, it was now nearly twelve o'clock, and I decided to find a comfortable nook for my lunch, and then return to camp.

"The lay of the land had much to do with my subsequent adventure, so that I recall it now with distinctness. I was on the top of a low ridge extending east and west along the bases of two peaks which rose up on each side of the ridge.

"At the end of this central ridge, some distance in advance of it, fell a precipice into the valley below. The hollows between the two higher peaks and the ridge were filled with snow and ice, under one of which, and at its side, flowed a shallow stream of water. In looking for a sheltered place in which to eat my luncheon I had noticed the space between the end of the central ridge and the edge of the precipice. It looked very pleasant, sheltered as it was from the brisk, cool winds, with the bright sun shining full upon it.

"The stream of water, or some other agency, had made an opening, or crevice, between the ice in the hollow on the western side of the ridge and the peak which rose near it, wide enough for me to pass through to the open space beyond, that looked so inviting.

"Following this crevice back a short distance, I found a jagged ledge, with projections of ice opposite, that would enable me with comparative ease to get to the bottom of the narrow passage. Using these projections, I succeeded in reaching the shallow water that flowed in the bed of the crevice, and thus easily passed on to the sheltered space beyond.

"There was no opening in the mass of ice and snow that filled the hollow on the eastern side of the central ridge, and the end of this ridge, encased in ice, rose abruptly forty or fifty feet above the open space in which I stood. The ice in both hollows also ended abruptly nearly on a line with that which inclosed the point of the ridge.

"The current of water that ran through the crevice covered only a part of the west side of the open space, leaving elsewhere the rock on which I stood comparatively dry. Here, with a fine view before me, I sat down to eat my luncheon.

"After eating it I sat for some time admiring the grand landscape before me. I remember wondering how long the water that was running near me had been cutting its way along the side of the mass of snow and ice that had accumulated in the western hollow. Then I speculated in a listless sort of way, that the rains and snows of many centuries had passed through this ravine.

"The view in front and below was especially fascinating, while the waters of the small stream poured over the edge, and fell, looking like a mass of falling pearls, down to a shelving rock, until it became only mist and spray long before it reached the base of the precipice.

"I had a curiosity to know the height of this precipice, so, taking a cartridge from my belt and wrapping a piece of white paper about it, I dropped it into the abyss, and noted that it reached the bottom in five seconds. So I computed in my field-book that it was about four hundred feet from where I stood to the base of the precipice. Then I sat down, and, wearied by my long tramp, stretched myself upon my side and involuntarily dropped asleep.

"On looking at my watch when I awoke I saw that it was two o'clock, so I reluctantly concluded to leave my cool retreat. I took my gun and walked back towards the point in the cleft where I had entered.

"Imagine my surprise when I found that it was so narrow that I could not pass through it. I looked, rubbed my eyes, and looked again. Yes, there was an opening, but it was not a foot wide. With a quickened pulse I began to investigate.

"The ice-wall was certainly nearer to the brink of the precipice than it had been when I passed through the crevice. A thin line of the alluvial-like dust which accumulates on the rocks of fresh-water streams was scraped up at the base of the ice-wall, and one of my foot-prints on this thin, soft substance was partly hidden by the ice.

"The truth was now perfectly plain! Had there ever been another man so inconceivably thoughtless as to walk into a trap like that?

"The mass of ice and snow behind me had begun to move downward. Already it had cut off my retreat. I was hemmed in before a slowly moving ice-fall, and should be resistlessly crowded down over the brink into the fearful abyss beyond.

"At first I was dazed by this awful discovery. Then I began nervously to look about for some way of escape; but neither the smooth walls of the sides of my prison nor the perpendicular face of the moving cliff offered any footing up which it would be possible for me to climb more than a few feet.

"Trembling in every nerve, and with a sinking heart, I went to the verge of the precipice. A few moments before I had looked with pleasure down into the abyss. How different it appeared now! A single glance made my head swim and my heart chill with horror.

"Time and again I paced up and down my slowly shortening prison, seeking some hitherto overlooked means of escape. I thrust my rifle in between the ice and the side of the channel, madly hoping that it would in some way check the movement of that awful mass. I might as well have tried in the same way to check the waters of the St. Lawrence.

"I struck my hunting knife into the ice to see if I could not cut steps for my hands and feet, and thus draw myself up the face of the ice-wall. At almost the first blow the blade snapped from the handle, which fell into the water and glided over the brink.

"Then I gave up hope.

"Still, with a sort of fascination, I wished I could know how much longer I had to live. I had a small tape line in my pocket. With it I measured the distance from the edge of the precipice to the base of the ice-cliff. It was just sixty-two feet.

"Then I took my watch and observed the mass while it passed over three feet. It seemed to move steadily at the rate of about six inches a minute.

"I did not need to put down the figures in order to know that—even if the movement did not increase with the heat—I had a little less than two hours to live; nevertheless, in a dazed way, I put the figures down in my field-book. It must have

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been purely the force of habit that led me to do so. I even reflected that I should be crowded from my position before the ice reached the brink, and so, as it was just fourteen minutes past two, I concluded that I could not hope to remain on the ledge longer than until ten minutes past four o'clock.

"Strange details, you think, for a man in such peril to busy himself with! But I believe that the horrible fear and suspense must at times have unsettled my mind, which seems to have gone from one extreme to the other, so that my imagination conjured up all kinds of strange and unexpected fancies.

"A breath of wind bore a delicate bit of moss to my feet. Then I remembered that I had seen moss of the same kind many years before at the funeral of one of the playmates of my boyhood. Loving hands had twined a mossy wreath and placed it upon the coffin. Every feature of the fair, peaceful countenance lying upon its snowy pillow came distinctly to my mental vision.

"Mechanically I began to sketch the dead face on a leaf of my book. But the consciousness of my awful peril did not leave me, and the rough sketch seemed to transform itself into a vivid picture of a mangled body lying among grisly boulders at the foot of a precipice, and buried beneath masses of snow and ice.

"It seems to me that I did not so much shrink from death, or even cling to life; but the thought of the horrible sensation of falling filled me with dread. It seemed as if my sensations would not end with death. I even felt that if I were to send a bullet crashing through my brain, I should still feel that horrible sensation of falling; and that if my body were ground to powder I should still be conscious of the crash of that great mass that would fall upon me.

"With these, and many other fantastic and terrifying imaginings, my mind was occupied until three o'clock. The mass of ice still moved with almost the precision of a machine. As I sat looking up at the sky, flecked here and there with gauzy clouds, a dark speck appeared circling above me. Then another came in sight following the first.

"As they came nearer I saw that they were vultures. When they were within thirty feet of my head, delicately poising and balancing themselves, they seemed, to my insane imaginings, to be exulting in their superiority and my helplessness. The thought exasperated me. I drew up my rifle and fired at the nearest bird. It disappeared downwards, with a wing broken close to its body. But as it caught with its claws on one of the long icicles that depended from the side of the precipice, and clung there, wildly flapping its one wing, I pitied the poor thing, and reviled myself for my cruelty.

"I saw that it had but a slight hold upon the ice, and resolved to try and reach it and put an end to its suffering. I made a noose in one end of my tape line, and having fastened the other end to my gun, I lay down and reached as far as I dared. I should have caught it, but the poor thing loosened its hold and fell, turning over and over until it struck the bottom, quivered, and became still. Here I beheld the rehearsal of my own approaching fate.

"My head began to swim and my eyes to blur. Just then a small bird, almost white, darted up past my face, and drew my attention. I sprang to my feet and looked for it, but it was out of sight. I half fancied that it was the soul of the dead bird flying away to heaven.

"Again I looked at my watch. The hands pointed to half-past three. I could not believe it. Still I dreaded to look behind me, as one might dread to look at a crouching tiger ready to spring upon him as he looked. Nevertheless, I forced myself to do it. My watch was confirmed, and I sank back, knowing that I had but forty minutes more to live.

"A newspaper that had been wrapped about my luncheon lay near me. I picked it up and began to read. It was an ordinary newspaper, though nearly a year old, of course. Some of the paragraphs held my attention, because in one way or another the expressions used suggested my situation:

"'A young business man of bright prospects had begun to speculate. Successful at first, he continued to speculate in a larger way. Finally, when he had become deeply involved, his losses began. 'On the Brink of Bankruptcy,' the paper said, 'he made a desperate struggle to bear up under his misfortunes, but his reputation was gone. He was overpowered by a mass of adverse circumstances, and crowded down to ruin.

"Another article told of a handsome, intelligent boy, always successful in his studies, who had been so intent on developing his mental powers that he had neglected to care for his health, and was now lying 'on the verge of insanity, pressed down by a host of bodily ailments.'

"Under the heading 'Death of a Drunkard' was told the familiar story of an intelligent, capable young man who prided himself upon his ability to throw off his habit of drinking a glass now and then whenever he should find the habit was becoming injurious to him. In time he became a confirmed drunkard. He then struggled to escape from his overpowering vice, but it was too late, and, as the paper put it, 'He was forced from the brink of respectability into a pit of degradation, and buried beneath an avalanche of shame.'

"So rapidly did my imagination work that I seemed to live over the temptations, struggles, fears, hopes, and disappointments of each of those unfortunate lives as it neared its respective brink.

"The sun was shining in my face, and I started to change my position. My hand struck something cold! The mass was almost upon me. Fifteen minutes more—and all would be over!

"I got up and placed my back against the eastern side of the advancing column, with my hand raised above my head and gripping the slight, icy projection.

"A thrill went through me as my gun, pushed by the moving ice, slipped and slid over the edge of the precipice. I heard it as it struck and bounded from the side of the cliff until it reached the bottom. I tried to close my eyes but I could not.

"Suddenly then the rock beneath my feet seemed to tremble. The icicles that hung from the ice on the other side of the open space snapped and fell. There was a rumbling sound that grew louder. Then the entire mass of ice in the hollow on the western side of the ridge, where the current of water flowed, shot out by me, and, pouring over the edge of the precipice, fell with a crash that seemed to make the whole earth quiver. This was followed by a rush of water.

"Almost blinded as I was, even in my insane fear I knew what had happened. The ice accumulations in the other ravine had been pushed forward by an avalanche of snow from the heights behind. Undermined by flow of water beneath it had moved readily, and thus had taken the whole force of the avalanche.

"Every moment I expected that the mass behind me would in like manner be pushed forward.

"But no! The echoes died away among the crags, the torrent of water that had shot down in the wake of the ice ceased, and I found myself standing as before with the brink of the precipice—the horrible precipice—yawning just before me.

"Then came a wild hope of escape.

"Starting from where I stood, I darted swiftly round the edge of the central ridge, pushed my way through the accumulations of snow that still blocked the channel, and then leaped and pushed ahead like a madman until I had reached a place where I could climb from the ravine to the level above.

"Here I remembered trying to laugh, pray, sing, shout, and weep all at the same time. Then, as another thunderous roar sounded among the crags, I swooned.

"It was nearly sundown when I came to myself. The moon rose so that I could see my way, and it was midnight before I reached camp.

"I have been trying to forget that experience, but it is impossible. My nerves that day received a strain from which they will never recover.

"To-day I thought I would discipline myself by going down over the cliff. I got along well enough at first, but when I opened my field-book to write in it I found that by some mistake I had put in my pocket the same book that I had used while imprisoned on that brink.

"Instantly that old scene came back to me, and I lost my self-possession. I think I dropped that book into the gorge, and I hope I may never see it again."

He never did.

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On the Battlefield

It happened during the siege: we had been fighting all day at the outposts, in the neighbourhood of Bourget.

That evening, after roll-call, just as I was preparing to take some rest, my captain came up to me and said:

"Lieutenant, I have got another job for you. Before you lie down take a few men with you and have a look round the field. Above all things be prudent, and go without lanterns; the night is clear; the reflection from the snow will allow of your seeing round about you for a good distance.

"Yesterday's reports indicated the presence of a band of night-prowlers. These birds of prey must be hunted down. A number of corpses have been robbed of their clothes, and were discovered lying in the grass this morning stripped. Here are the orders that the colonel has requested me to communicate to you. You are to bring into the camp any of these scoundrels whom you may capture, and let fly a bullet into the backs of any who attempt to escape. All's fair in war. No quarter is to be given the rascals. Go, and good luck go with you."

My little company set out silently with loaded rifles. An icy wind was whistling round us, whirling clouds of snow into our faces.

We crossed the lines and were soon in the open country. The captain had spoken truly; the night was splendid, and the moon shed her rays far over the fields, her pale light glinting here and there on the pools of blood. Not a sound. Away on the horizon we could distinguish the Prussian encampment.

For a quarter of an hour we marched along with stealthy footsteps, holding our breaths, mute and alert, when we saw moving about under a tree a black figure.

"There's one of them," murmured the corporal, bringing his gun to his shoulder.

"Let no one stir," I replied, and I advanced alone.

At the foot of the tree lay an officer of the Marine Infantry, his forehead shattered by a bullet. The blood had run down his face and soaked his uniform, and trickled on in a long rivulet over the snow. In his hand was still clasped a discharged revolver, and I noticed that he wore on his finger a costly ring. I can recall that ring now—a ruby surrounded by diamonds.

Bending over the dead man, and holding his hand, was a dark and withered form. It was an old woman, with masculine features and glaring sinister eyes. She was dressed in dark-coloured rags, and her head was covered with a fearfully dilapidated hat.

"What are you doing there?" I demanded, touching her on the shoulder.

She did not answer. Her silence exasperated me.

"You are afraid to answer, but I will tell you what you are here for. You are a 'night bird,' and you have come to rob the dead."

"No," she replied quietly.

"Well, then, you must come with me. I don't believe you. As you will not tell me why you are here alone at this hour, you must come to the camp and give an explanation to the colonel."

"No, I will not," she answered. "I am watching him."

"Watching whom?"

"Him," she repeated, pointing to the corpse.

"Nonsense! Do you take me for a fool? It is not the usual thing for beggars to be watching dead bodies on a field of battle. I don't believe in such noble sentiments! Especially when corpses wear such rings as that on their fingers!"

At this she drew close to me, and looked me straight in the face with her cold grey eyes.

"He was my son!" she answered, in a broken voice. "They have killed him; let me remain by him!"

Then, without waiting for my consent, she knelt down beside the dead man and began murmuring a prayer.

"As he is your son, you may remain," I replied, and moved away.

I rejoined my little company, and whispered this order in the corporal's ear, "Let us pretend to go away, and hide ourselves behind a clump of trees. I am not satisfied about that old hag over there, near that officer's body. We must watch her; if she does not stir, leave her alone; if she moves, fire."

Hidden by a turn in the road we could see without being seen.

The black dress of the old woman looked like a sombre blot on the dazzling whiteness of the snow; suddenly we saw her stoop over the face of the corpse; her head seemed to touch the head of the young man; then she arose, glanced two or three times round her, and fled in the opposite direction to that in which we were hidden.

"Fire!" I shouted.

Three shots were fired; the old woman had only time to run ten yards, then flung up her arms in the air, uttering a piercing shriek, and fell on her face.

"Potted!" cried the corporal, laughing.

I walked up to the dead woman when, close to us, a voice shaking with fear, cried three times, "Wer da?" (who goes there).

The third challenge was followed by a flash, and a bullet buried itself in the trunk of a tree against which I was leaning.

The alarm had been given, so we were obliged to retreat to our camp; but for a considerable time we heard behind us the cries of the sentries echoing through the silence of the night.

I slept restlessly; ever before my eyes was that terrible vision of the old woman spinning round before she fell.

On the following morning, whilst my brother officers and myself were snatching our breakfast, a young lieutenant of the Marine Infantry came up to our party. His eyes were full of tears.

"What's the matter with you, my boy?" cried Gachard, half-laughingly, half-anxiously.

"I have just seen a horrible sight," replied the officer. "I had a friend in my regiment; he came from my own part of the country—a capital fellow. He passed out of St. Cyr in the same year as myself. We went through our terms together at Brest, and were inseparable. Yesterday he was struck by a bullet in the head; I saw him fall, but, as we were retreating, I could not leave the ranks, not even to wish him farewell.

"He is over there, on the battlefield, lying under a tree. Last night his mother wandered about looking for her son; she was a poor old creature, who had none but him, and she worshipped him.

"Ever since the beginning of the campaign, insensible to fatigue and misery, and squalid as a beggar, she followed the regiment step by step, at the risk of being shot. She must have seen the face of many a dead man before she discovered the corpse that she sought; however, she succeeded at last, she knelt down beside him, bent over his sightless eyes, closed them piously, and cut off a lock of his hair.

"Did you notice the report of a rifle about midnight? Just as she was going away with her precious relic, a Prussian sentry must have espied her; he fired, and the poor woman fell, mortally wounded. She found strength, however, to drag herself back to the body of her son, and there she died, her head pillowed on his breast."

. . . . . .

I sank to the ground fainting.

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Curious Experiments

IN

CORPULENCY

"A Mr. Russell, author and specialist in obesity, has experimentally tried the effect of administering large doses to moderate lean persons of his well-known herbal discovery, which is so marvellously effectual in reducing superfluous fat, with the result that there is not the slightest alteration or diminution of weight recorded, thereby proving conclusively to our minds that it is only the unhealthy adipose waste tissue which is destroyed, for after dispensing a few fluid ounces of his remarkable vegetable compounds he succeeds in destroying the diseased fatty mass at the rate of from 2 lb. to even 12 lb. in seven days. There can be no ambiguity about it, for any persons can test this for themselves by standing upon a weighing machine. He explains that all lean persons carry a certain amount of fat necessary for the natural production of heat in the body, but Nature has only stored up her requisite stock in the healthy system, which she most zealously guards, and thus declines to part with an ounce to the persuasions of Mr. Russell's vegetable tonic, however immoderate the dose may be, which testifies abundantly to the fact that it is only a chemical solvent of insalubrious adipose tissue. There is no doubt that the inventor of the composition must have possessed a profound vegetal knowledge in selecting this simple but peculiar combination.

"Those who resort to the pernicious products of the mineral kingdom, or even the deleterious sections of the vegetable world, doubtless can decoct something powerful but injurious in its action; such, however, require no laudatory commendation; but Mr. Russell (we herewith append his address: Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., the author of 'Corpulency, and the Cure,' 256 pages, price 4d. stamps) makes no secret of the simplicity of his treatment, and avers that the decoction can be drank as a refreshing summer drink, pleasant to the palate, yet having sufficient effect, although perfectly harmless, to remove generally 2 lb. or more in twenty-four hours. We think stout persons would do well to send for his book, which can be obtained through booksellers, or at the address given above."—*Leeds Times*, December 1, 1894.

TO METAMORPHOSE

FAT PERSONS

"We were reading in the 'Penny Illustrated Paper' how to reduce obesity, wherein it says in that very excellent publication: 'The corpulent will be glad to learn how to lose two stone in about a month with benefit to health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular fact that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state with increased activity of brain, digestive, and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one to two pounds daily, as the weighing machine will prove. The Book, "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), containing the "recipe," can be had gratis from Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by sending cost of postage, fourpence.' He has discovered a simple herbal remedy, most pleasant to the taste, which entirely disposes of the necessity of starving oneself in endeavouring to be rid of all superfluous matter. An interesting point, which goes to prove that the almost magical compound is beyond doubt harmless, is that in prescribing it in a tentative way to lean persons, or rather to those who carry no superfluity of fat beyond that which is required as fuel for Nature's furnace, the medicine is absolutely inoperative, attacking only that unhealthy, disease-creating waste accumulation which is the burden of the fat creature's existence. In many cases where people take decoctions reputed to be new medical discoveries to cure some specific disease, they may recover by the action of the medicine, or Nature may have effected her own cure. In the case of corpulency, if a simple remedy undertakes to reduce a person, say, 7 lb. in a week, all that one has to do is to get weighed, and thus prove it conclusively. So it is with Mr. Russell's compound, but he asks you to prove it in twenty-four hours only."—*Coventry Standard*, January 18, 1895.

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